

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Page 6, amend the paragraph beginning at line 14 as follows:

Returning to the structure of the hardened ATM cell, Figure 2 shows the encoded payload 20, encoded header 21 and a 31 bit synchronisation word 32 (where implemented, see Applicants' copending UK patent application [~~Invention Docket No. XA1294/1295~~] No. 0101704.5 filed 23 January 2001 and published as GB 2410159) interleaved into a contiguous bit stream forming a frame 591 bits in length. Each cell therefore contains two complete Reed Solomon codewords which maximises protection against errors for the shorter, non-payload elements. To this end the sensitivity of the payload data to burst errors may vary depending on the nature of the ATM network user traffic (i.e. voice, data etc.). The hardened ATM cells are then transmitted via the network as ATM cells assembled as described above.